



TV STAR SUSAN LUCCI TAKES MESSAGE OF REDUCING ATRIAL FIBRILLATION-RELATED STROKE RISK TO THE AIRWAVES THROUGH PERSONAL STORY AND PLEDGE

Facing AFib Program Offers Information, Tools and Free Book

Ridgefield, CT- August 3, 2011 – Susan Lucci is no stranger to the spotlight and now she is talking about a serious issue that’s close to her heart – atrial fibrillation (AFib) and its connection to stroke.¹ In a national public service announcement (PSA) recently launched, Lucci and her husband, Helmut Huber, who lives with AFib, are encouraging the more than 2.3 million Americans living with the condition,² along with their loved ones, to join them in taking the *Facing AFib* Pledge to do all they can to reduce the risk of AFib-related stroke.

Lucci has made every effort possible to learn about AFib in order to help her husband manage his condition after he was diagnosed more than a decade ago. Now, the couple aims to increase awareness and understanding of AFib, a type of irregular heart beat¹ that can increase the risk of stroke five times,³ through a national program called *Facing AFib, Get Serious About Stroke*[™]. By visiting www.FacingAFib.com and joining the *Facing AFib* Pledge, patients and loved ones can commit to learning more about the condition, partnering with their doctors and finding out what can be done to reduce the risk of AFib-related stroke. Visitors also can register for a free, educational book, *AFib and Stroke: The Heart-Head Connection*.

Atrial fibrillation is a serious condition where an irregular heart beat can result in the formation of blood clots.¹ These blood clots can travel from the heart to the brain, where they can lead to a stroke.¹ Strokes associated with AFib can be about twice as likely to be fatal⁴ or severely disabling as other types of stroke.⁵ But, the good news is this risk can be significantly reduced.⁶

“Having been happily married for more than 41 years, Helmut and I are a true team. We play an active role in each other’s health and work together to manage his AFib and reduce his risk of stroke,” said Lucci. “We know how much a stroke can impact all aspects of our family and we’re doing everything we can to reduce his risk. We hope the *Facing AFib* PSA and website will help educate others about the risk of stroke associated with AFib and will encourage them to do all that they can to manage the condition, just like us.”

In addition to the celebrity spokescouple, the PSA also features Dr. David Willis of Ocala West Family Practice Medicine PA, Ocala, FL, who regularly treats patients with AFib. Dr. Willis is helping to raise awareness about AFib and stroke because he knows firsthand how valuable it is for patients to partner with their doctors and have the support of their loved ones. *Facing AFib* partnering organizations National Stroke Association and StopAfib.org also participated in the PSA to reinforce the importance of patients and their loved ones getting serious about AFib-related stroke.

“Many people diagnosed with AFib don’t understand that there is an increased risk of stroke associated with the condition,” said Mellanie True Hills, founder of StopAfib.org. “With National Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month coming up in September, we encourage everyone to join the *Facing AFib* Pledge and commit to doing all they can to reduce AFib-related stroke.”

The *Facing AFib* Pledge and other useful tools can be found at www.FacingAFib.com. The website features a state-by-state *Facing AFib* Pledge Map that allows visitors to see where others like them have joined in taking the pledge. *Facing AFib* is supported by founding sponsor Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. along with National Stroke Association and StopAfib.org.

“As we strive to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke in America, raising awareness about AFib and stroke among patients and their loved ones is key,” said Jim Baranski, CEO, National Stroke Association. “That’s why it’s important for those impacted by AFib to get serious about stroke and to take the pledge at FacingAFib.com. The website is a great place to find information and resources to help patients and their families discuss the condition and AFib-related stroke risk reduction with their physicians.”

About Atrial Fibrillation and Stroke

Atrial fibrillation is one of the most common sustained heart rhythm abnormalities.² Atrial fibrillation is associated with up to 15 percent of all strokes in the U.S.³ The prevalence of AFib is expected to increase 2.5-fold to 5.6 million by 2050, reflecting the growing population of elderly individuals.² The risk of stroke associated with AFib increases with age.⁷ People with risk factors such as high blood pressure and diabetes are at increased risk of developing AFib.¹

***Facing AFib* Partnering Organizations**

Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., the founding sponsor of the *Facing AFib* program, has joined with two leading patient advocacy organizations to help raise public awareness of AFib and its related increased stroke risk:

National Stroke Association is the only national organization in the United States that focuses 100 percent of its efforts on stroke. The organization achieves its mission to lower the incidence and impact of stroke by developing compelling community outreach programs, calling for continued improvement in the quality of stroke patient care and educating both healthcare professionals and the general public about stroke. Visit www.stroke.org or call 1-800-STROKES (1-800-787-6537) for more information. Join our Facebook page at www.stroke.org/facebook.

StopAfib.org founder, Mellanie True Hills, created the site as part of the American Foundation for Women's Health to share what she and other atrial fibrillation (AFib) patients have learned and to provide others with information and answers to their questions. StopAfib.org is a patient-to-patient resource to help patients understand and manage their AFib so it doesn't rule their lives. The site reaches out to patients, families, and caregivers, who all deal with the life-changing impact of AFib. StopAfib.org also contains an AFib Services Locator to help patients find the right resources for treating and managing their AFib. (www.stopafib.org)

About Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., based in Ridgefield, CT, is the largest U.S. subsidiary of Boehringer Ingelheim Corporation (Ridgefield, CT) and a member of the Boehringer Ingelheim group of companies.

The Boehringer Ingelheim group is one of the world's 20 leading pharmaceutical companies. Headquartered in Ingelheim, Germany, it operates globally with 145 affiliates and more than 42,000 employees. Since it was founded in 1885, the family-owned company has been committed to researching, developing, manufacturing and marketing novel products of high therapeutic value for human and veterinary medicine.

For Boehringer Ingelheim—and its employees—carrying a good share of social responsibility is an important component in its business culture. Both global commitments in social projects and properly caring for all its employees are included. Respect, equal opportunity, and the balance of career and family life form the basis for mutual cooperation. And, environmental protection and sustainability are always the main focus during any of Boehringer Ingelheim's undertakings.

In 2010, Boehringer Ingelheim posted net sales of approximately \$16.7 billion (about 12.6 billion euro) while spending almost 24% of net sales in its largest business segment, Prescription Medicines, on research and development.

For more information, please visit <http://us.boehringer-ingelheim.com> and follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/boehringerus>.

###

CONTACT:

Anna Moses
Public Affairs & Communications
Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Phone: 203-798-4638
Email: anna.moses@boehringer-ingelheim.com

¹ NHLBI website. "What is AFib?" Available at:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/af/af_what.html. Accessed on: July 19, 2011.

² Go, A.S., et al. "Prevalence of Diagnosed Atrial Fibrillation in Adults: National Implications for Rhythm Management and Stroke Prevention: the AnTicoagulation and Risk Factors in Atrial Fibrillation (ATRIA) Study." *JAMA*. 2001; 285:2370-2375.

³ Fuster, V., et al. "ACC/AHA/ESC 2006 Guidelines for the Management of Patients With Atrial Fibrillation – Executive Summary: A Report of the American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines and the European Society of Cardiology Committee for Practice Guidelines (Writing Committee to Revise the 2001 Guidelines for the Management of Patients With Atrial Fibrillation): Developed in Collaboration With the European Heart Rhythm Association and the Heart Rhythm Society." *Circulation*. 2006; 114:700-752.

⁴ Lin, H., et al. "Stroke Severity in Atrial Fibrillation: The Framingham Study." *Stroke*. 1996; 27:1760-1764.

⁵ Dulli, D.A., et al. "Atrial Fibrillation is Associated with Severe Acute Ischemic Stroke." *Neuroepidemiology*. 2003; 22:118-123.

⁶ Hart, R.G., et al. "Meta-analysis: Antithrombotic Therapy to Prevent Stroke in Patients Who Have Nonvalvular Atrial Fibrillation." *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2007; 146:857-867.

⁷ Frost, L., et al. "Age and Risk of Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation: Evidence for Guidelines?" *Neuroepidemiology*. 2007; 28:109-115.